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DEP Investigating Lycoming County Fracking Fluid Spill at XTO Energy Marcellus Well

Spill Impacted Spring, Unnamed Tributary to Sugar Run

WILLIAMSPORT -- The Department of Environmental Protection is continuing to investigate a large hydraulic fracturing fluid spill at an XTO Energy natural gas well pad in Penn Township, Lycoming County, which was first discovered last week.

“This spill was initially estimated at more than 13,000 gallons by the company and has polluted an unnamed tributary to Sugar Run and a spring,” said DEP Northcentral Regional Director Nels Taber. “There are also two private drinking water wells in the vicinity that will be sampled for possible impacts.”

A DEP inspector discovered the spill while inspecting the well pad. The inspector found that the bottom valve on a 21,000-gallon fracking fluid tank was open and discharging fluid off the well pad. No one else was present at the pad, which has one producing Marcellus well.

The DEP inspector was able to close the valve and XTO Energy officials were immediately contacted about the spill. The company has not provided any explanation for the open valve.

XTO Energy hired cleanup contractor Minuteman Response, which has been on-site for several days vacuuming spilled fluids and mobilizing equipment to excavate soil. A fence also has been installed to prevent a neighbor’s cattle from grazing in the impacted area of the pasture.

DEP inspectors have collected samples of nearby soil samples and surface water. Initial field meter readings showed elevated levels of conductivity and salinity in the spring and unnamed

tributary.

Conductivity measures water's ability to carry an electric current, while salinity measures the dissolved salt content in water. Elevated levels of both are indications that spilled fracking fluid is present.

A notice of violation letter will be sent to XTO Energy this week and the company will be required to remediate the site properly.

For more information, call 570-327-3659 or visit www.depweb.state.pa.us.

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